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Senator John Coulter

Australian Democrats Leader

NEWS RELEASE

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Australian Democrats support Timor Independence

The Leader of the Australian Democrats Senator John Coulter has written to the President of Portugal reaffirming Democrat support for Timorese independence.

In doing so Senator Coulter has made it clear that not all Australian political parties agree with the Government's acceptance of Indonesian annexation.

Although a minority party the Democrats hold the balance of power in the Federal Senate. They were the only party to vote against the Timor Gap oil rights treaty in 1990.

In his letter Senator Coulter said his party would "endeavour to have the aspirations of the East Timorese people heard in our region, and encourage the Government of Portugal, and other governments, to continue their efforts towards a peaceful and just settlement for the people of East Timor".

Senator Coulter expressed support for the Portuguese plan to resolve the Timor question through the United Nations.

He has repeatedly said that the Democrats found no difference between Iraq's attempted annexation of Kuwait and the Indonesian government's actions in Timor. Senator Coulter deplored the hypocrisy and double standards of the leaders of the nations that moved swiftly against Iraq while leaving the people of Timor in a state of permanent oppression.

Contact: Senator John Coulter (6) 277 3646

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA · THE SENATE

John R. Coulter
Senator for South Australia
Leader of the Australian Democrats

14 April 1992

His Excellency
Mr Mario Soares
President of Portugal

Your Excellency

The Australian Democrats welcome the opportunity of advising you of our support for self determination of the East Timorese people, which is presented by the visit to Portugal by the Australian President of the Timorese Democratic Union, Mr Joao Carrascalao.

The Australian Democrats are pleased to express support for the initiatives undertaken by the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Mr Joao de Deus Pinheiro at the meeting with the UN Secretary General, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on January 24 1992. In particular, the central role of both the UN and representatives of the East Timorese people to take part in talks with Indonesia under the auspices of the UN Secretary General is considered to be an extremely viable manner of reaching a just resolution in East Timor.

The Australian Democrats further express support for the declaration adopted by the twelve member states of the European Community on December 3rd 1991, calling for a solution which is just, global and internationally acceptable, according to the principles of the UN Charter, and which fully respects the legitimate interests and aspirations of the people of East Timor.

The Australian Democrats express concern at the extent of torture and other cruel practices in East Timor which are raised by Mr Pieter Kooijmans in his report to the UN Commission on Human Rights, on January 8th 1992. The recommendations contained in his report are supported by the Australian Democrats. These include:-

1. Indonesia should endorse the International Political and Economic Covenants and ratify the Convention against Torture.

2. The independence of the judiciary should be respected and the judiciary should be more protective of human rights.

3. An arrested persons' right to a lawyer, which is guaranteed by Indonesian law, must be respected.

4. All evidence not collected in conformity with the law should be dismissed

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in court.

5. The Anti-Subversion Law should be repealed.

6. A national commission on human rights should be established which , inter alia, could receive complaints of torture and investigate such complaints.

7. Officials guilty of torture should be severely punished.

8. Jurisdiction over offences committed by the military and police should be given to the civilian courts.

The Australian Democrats will endeavour to have the aspirations of the East Timorese people heard in our region, and encourage the Government of Portugal, and other governments, to continue their efforts towards a peaceful and just settlement for the people of East Timor.

Yours sincerely

John R. Coulter

Senator John Coulter
Parliamentary Leader
Australian Democrats

PS For further information, I can be contacted in Parliament House, Canberra from April 27th to 30th inclusive on 06 277 3645. I am usually there between 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m., and will be available for comment, chamber duties permitting.